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Adoption of the report of the Committee on its fifty-seventh session

Draft report

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Addendum

Programme questions: evaluation

(Item 3 (b))

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the evaluation of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

1. At its 9th meeting, on 8 June 2017, the Committee considered the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) on the evaluation of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (E/AC.51/2017/11).

2. The Assistant Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services introduced the report and, together with representatives of OIOS and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, responded to questions raised during its consideration by the Committee.

Discussion

3. Delegations expressed appreciation for the report, including the recommendations, and supported the balanced analysis of the advocacy work of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Delegations underlined the critical leadership role of the Office in coordinating international humanitarian assistance to people affected by humanitarian crises (for example in South Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic), and expressed appreciation for the Office's culture of assistance, notwithstanding the increasing volume, magnitude, duration and intensity of crises globally. A delegation requested the Office to consider how it could better capture the staff time and resources it expended in executing its many

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advocacy activities, as referenced in paragraphs 14 and 19 of the report. A delegation further requested an update on recommendation 3, regarding preparatory steps in the development of a new advocacy strategy based on evidence, experience and audience insight and including clear advocacy objectives. The delegation emphasized the importance of articulating such objectives in 2018.

4. Delegations noted that there were many countries in which crises had been ongoing for decades, but were no longer well publicized in the media. Referencing paragraph 32 of the report, delegations agreed with the OIOS conclusion that advocacy efforts by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs should systematically include those "forgotten crises" irrespective of their location, and not solely focus on those featured in the media. A delegation emphasized that the Office's attention to crises should be guided by the principles of neutrality and non-discrimination, through the identification of those in need above all other considerations. A delegation contrasted the examples of the Syrian Arab Republic, where the Office had issued 127 advocacy outputs between 2013 and 2016; Yemen, where the number of persons in need was 1.5 times higher and yet the Office had issued only 64 advocacy outputs; and African countries (see E/AC.51/2017/11, figure VIII), where the discrimination in advocacy efforts was unacceptable.

5. A delegation underlined the importance of high-level access and the contribution of the presence of Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs staff on the ground (ibid., para. 26 (c)) and emphasized the importance of fostering links with both the humanitarian and diplomatic communities at the field and headquarters levels (in line with recommendation 2). Delegations encouraged the Office to continually raise awareness through its information materials and diplomatic contacts. Delegations enquired as to how the Office coordinated its advocacy activities with other humanitarian organizations, such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Committee of the Red Cross, and whether OIOS had consulted with those organizations in the course of its evaluation.

6. A delegation underlined the importance of political prudence in advocacy, outputs and publications, noting that officials of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (specifically junior staff members who were not cognizant of politically sensitive situations) had at times crossed political lines in their statements, resulting in the inappropriate politicization of issues. The delegation provided as an example the "dramatization" of a report on the use of illegal tunnels between Gaza and Sinai, which it believed would lead readers to sympathize with the users of the tunnels only, and added that the Office had addressed its concerns as soon as they had been raised.

7. Delegations supported the OIOS conclusions on the need to improve internal coordination within the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, noting in particular the ineffective coordination between its New York and Geneva offices. Delegations urged the Office to take steps to improve the its effectiveness and overall coordination through representatives at all levels in New York, Geneva and field offices acting in a coordinated manner and promoting a unified position without contradicting one another. Delegations underlined the importance of the implementation of an internal coordination mechanism under the authority of the Under-Secretary-General/Emergency Relief Coordinator (recommendation 2).

8. A delegation sought clarification from OIOS as to how it had established that the briefings by the Under-Secretary-General/Emergency Relief Coordinator to the Security Council were a determining factor in the adoption of Council resolutions. The delegation expressed the view that the link had been exaggerated in the report, recalled that providing the Council with briefings on consolidated views of

humanitarian needs was but one function performed by the Coordinator and stated that referring to the number of briefings provided by the Coordinator as an indicator would not be appropriate. It underlined that the Coordinator only addressed the Council at the invitation of its members and that other considerations were brought to bear when the Council adopted resolutions.

9. A delegation expressed concern over the outcomes of the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit and suggested that despite the efforts made leading up to the Summit, not enough had been accomplished to maintain the intergovernmental nature of the event and to allow delegations to intervene to achieve specific outputs.

10. A delegation noted the degree of convergence between the findings of the OIOS evaluation and those of the Functional Review commissioned in 2015 by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. A brief update was sought from the Office on the implementation of the recommendations from the Review. The delegation emphasized the need for the Office to consider both reports in the implementation of management reforms under its organizational transformation process.

Conclusions and recommendations

11. **The Committee recommended that the General Assembly endorse the recommendations contained in paragraphs 60 to 62 of the report of OIOS on the evaluation of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, while recognizing the need for alignment with all internal management reforms under way within the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.**

12. **The Committee emphasized the importance of advocacy among other components of the mandate and global work of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.**

13. **The Committee emphasized the need for the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to continue the development of an advocacy strategy under its change management process that would include clear objectives and would allow the Office to deploy evidence-based approaches, anchored in the guiding principles of humanitarian emergency assistance, including humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence, and noted that the Office could be a more effective voice within the United Nations system for principled humanitarian action.**